
Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Program

Student Services Series



Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling

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Department of Education

Lawrence Delbridge, Guidance Consultant (retired)
Patrick Kakembo, Director, African Canadian Services
Sister Dorothy Moore, Consultant, Mi'kmaq Services
Bill Spears, Guidance Consultant, Student Services
David White, Regional Education Officer

Schools

Janice Graham-Migel, Guidance Counsellor, Ridgeview Middle School
Brenda MacLaughlin, Guidance Counsellor, West Pictou District High School
Ken MacLean, Vice Principal, Pictou Academy
Clifford Maillet, Guidance Counsellor, Ecole NDA School
Beth Robinson, Guidance Counsellor, Kingston School
Betty-Lou Scott, Guidance Counsellor (retired)
Charles Yorke, Guidance Counsellor, Baddeck Academy
Yvonne Banks, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services, CSAP

University

John Sumarah, Professor, School of Education, Acadia University

Additional Contributors

Bob Gerard, Assistant Director, Student Services, New Brunswick Department of Education
Bob Larivee, Director, Central Missouri Vocational Education Consortium
Garnet Millar, Co-ordinator, Guidance and Counselling, Special Education (retired), Alberta Department of Education
Marion Starr, Director, Guidance and Placement, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education



Preface

The Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Program is a central component within a school's learning environment. It provides for the integration of guidance and counselling services into a comprehensive model that crosses the curricula to address student needs through well-defined learning outcomes.

This guide is designed as the program framework for Nova Scotia schools. Some schools will find that they are already developing and implementing portions of the program model, while others will be starting the process of developing their first guidance program. This guide will assist schools in designing, implementing, and evaluating a complete and comprehensive guidance and counselling program for all students.

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Introduction

The challenge of education today is to offer school experiences that provide students with opportunities to develop the understandings, skills, and attitudes necessary to become lifelong learners, capable of identifying and solving problems and dealing with change. Students need to be able to communicate clearly, competently, and confidently from a broad knowledge base in order to make thoughtful and responsible decisions. Achieving these educational goals will provide students with the means to make connections between what they learn and how they live (*Public School Programs 2000–2001*).

In response to these challenges, it is necessary to shift guidance and counselling from a position-focussed model that delivers services to specific populations to a comprehensive model that delivers programs and services to all students in the school. This shift is accompanied by a reconceptualization of guidance and counselling from an ancillary, crisis-oriented service model to a proactive, comprehensive model that includes preventative and responsive activities and is designed to meet the needs of the students it serves.

This model will assist in the development of student competencies in each area relating to the essential graduation learnings. Essential graduation learnings are statements describing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes expected of all students as they progress through the public school system in Nova Scotia. These areas are therefore cross-curricular and are not the monopoly of any one discipline. These learnings are in the areas of aesthetic expression, citizenship, communication, personal development, problem solving, and technological competence.

Program Structure

Program Aims

The program will

- provide a structure to help meet the guidance and counselling needs of all students
- encourage respect for individual strengths and needs and social and cultural diversity
- help students understand themselves and build meaningful relationships with others
- help students plan and achieve educational goals and explore personal career paths
- provide consultation and co-ordination services to educators, parents, administrators, and others who work with students
- ensure the accessibility of guidance and counselling to all students
- provide developmental as well as preventative and reactive services

Program Domains

The program will provide direction by assisting students to acquire knowledge, attitudes, strategies, and skills in the four program domains:

- **Personal**—to understand and appreciate oneself
- **Social**—to relate effectively to others
- **Educational**—to develop appropriate educational plans
- **Career**—to develop life and career plans

Program Characteristics

The program has the following essential characteristics:

- It is designed and developed as a school program with defined outcomes for students from grades primary to 12.
- It includes achievable and measurable student outcomes in each of the four student program domains: personal, social, educational, and career.
- It is developmental, in that activities appropriate to student maturity levels are systematically presented.
- It is developed in detail locally, within provincial parameters.
- It has four components:
 - guidance curriculum
 - professional services (counselling, co-ordination, and consultation)
 - life and career planning
 - program management and system support

- It outlines roles for all members of the school community.
- It includes the establishment of an advisory group comprising the guidance counsellor, educators, parents, students, support staff, and community representatives.
- A needs assessment undertaken with staff, parents, and students identifies the needs to be addressed by the program. The activities that are included in each component are defined through prioritizing the needs assessment results.
- Preventative and responsive activities are included in all components of the program.
- Implementation of the program requires the services of a qualified guidance counsellor. The qualified guidance counsellor manages and co-ordinates the program and delivers components of the program that require particular professional expertise.

Program Components

The components of the program are

- guidance curriculum
- counselling, consultation, and co-ordination
- life and career planning
- program management and system support

Each of these areas must be addressed in order for the program to be comprehensive and meet the needs of students in a school. All school staff have a role to play in each component.

Guidance Curriculum

The guidance curriculum involves students in structured experiences designed to meet the guidance curriculum outcomes throughout grades primary through 12. In addition to academic needs strong emphasis is placed on personal, social, educational, and career needs. The guidance curriculum is expected to be current and effective and to provide students with specific knowledge and life skills using appropriate instructional and assessment strategies.

With respect to the guidance curriculum, guidance counsellors provide both organizational and implementation assistance. However, the support and co-operation of all school staff is necessary for its successful implementation. Guidance counsellors work with classroom teachers and school administrators to assist them in integrating the guidance curriculum with the Public School Programs.

The assistance provided to teachers by guidance counsellors may take many forms, ranging from consultation to team teaching. Guidance counsellors may also teach some guidance-related units independently; however, the teaching of regularly scheduled classes

is usually not considered part of the guidance counsellor's role. If the guidance counsellor teaches regularly scheduled classes, it is as a teacher, not as a guidance counsellor.

The guidance curriculum is implemented primarily through two basic modes: scheduled classes taught by classroom teachers, and guidance counsellor-specific activities, which generally take place outside the classroom situation and are facilitated by qualified guidance counsellors.

- **Scheduled classes** are taught by classroom teachers. Teachers and counsellors, work collaboratively within the prescribed curriculum, to present specific learning activities or units; however, the classroom teacher maintains responsibility for the class. In general, the regular classroom activities related to guidance curriculum are incorporated into the curriculum of the Public School Programs such as the elementary health program, Personal Development and Relationships (PDR), and Career and Life Management (CALM). The guidance curriculum is not restricted to these specific courses—it should involve all curriculum areas. Many opportunities exist to address the outcomes across curriculum areas. For example, under language, communication, and expression, one may find the topic of death and dying being addressed through the study of a novel in an English language arts course.
- **Guidance counsellor-specific activities:** These will vary among school boards and schools in response to the nature of local needs. Examples of activities include a résumé writing workshop in response to a summer job program, working with students to develop a peer-helping program, anger management techniques or skills to deal with name calling or racial slurs.

Counselling, Consultation, and Co-ordination

These are professional services provided to address immediate situations and concerns of students requiring counselling, consultation, referral, or information. This component of the program must be delivered by a qualified guidance counsellor.

In this context, counselling is defined as purposeful interaction that promotes change in attitudes, skills, behaviour, knowledge, or awareness. It is conducted by a guidance counsellor with one or more students and includes personal, social, career, educational, and crisis issues. Counselling services may be initiated by students, staff, family, or the guidance counsellor.

Consultation involves interaction with parents, teachers, other educators, and community agencies regarding strategies to assist student issues or concerns. It consists of both structured processes

and informal teamwork and relationship-building processes. The structured processes often consist of case conferences or individual interviews with teachers, parents, and other agencies; while teamwork and relationship building is an ongoing process that engages all partners in the educational process and often takes place informally. Consultation also includes the interpretation of assessments with students, their families, and school staff to assist in identifying strengths and needs and to provide assistance in developing appropriate strategies.

Co-ordination of the program is also provided by a qualified guidance counsellor and takes place both within the school and the community. Co-ordination involves such tasks as orientation to various levels of the school system, co-ordination of guidance-related activities, post-secondary visits, and liaison among school, home, community, and the business world. Co-ordination also involves the qualified guidance counsellor as a key figure in arranging case conferences regarding individual student needs and how these needs can be met by the various partners.

The guidance counsellor's efforts are most effective in direct contact with students in the delivery of both preventative and responsive professional services. This component of the program not only assists students with crises or difficulties in their lives but also proactively assists with the development of their potential to effectively address them in the future.

Life and Career Planning

Activities in the life and career planning component of the program assist students to plan, monitor, and manage their learning and in their personal and career development in a rapidly changing world. Students must acquire the knowledge, develop the skills, and formulate the attitudes needed to deal with personal, social, educational, and occupational issues that have become increasingly sophisticated and complex due to changing social and economic structures. The life- and career-planning component will assist them to do this. A collaborative effort among educators, students, parents, and community members is required in order to develop and provide the most effective personal and career development for students.

More recently, the concept of career has expanded to include other roles (e.g., parent, leisure, volunteer, spouse), and career planning has come to be seen as a process of managing the variety of roles one plays throughout one's lifetime. Today, career planning is viewed as a dynamic process in which individuals are continuously balancing their vision, dreams, needs, skills, and interests with the changing demands of their environment. The traditional linear career path of education—work—retirement has been replaced by a

series of cycles: education, work, retraining, work, semi-retirement, and retirement. For many people, cycles of unemployment have also become part of the career path. Thus the central career-planning issue is no longer, "What am I going to be?" but rather, "How will I manage my progress through life?"

Career planning helps individuals to use the tools, strategies, and confidence needed to understand the current situation and future directions. It allows students to recognize and take advantage of the opportunities they encounter in life while, at the same time, minimizing the negative effects of uncertainty and unexpected events. In short, career planning provides the tools, techniques, and attitudes for individuals to be proactive, creative, and flexible in the face of changing demands and circumstances.

The responsibility to help students acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to develop their educational, occupational, and personal goals is shared by educators, parents, and the students themselves. Qualified guidance counsellors have a specific role to play in co-ordinating, planning, and directing life and career planning component activities. Classroom teachers are central to the delivery of parts of the program and in assisting students to plan for their futures.

Community members also assist students with personal and career development through various means, such as mentoring, job shadowing, co-operative education, and mediation.

Life and career planning is implemented using strategies that focus on

- individual assessment
- information gathering
- decision making
- goal setting
- personal portfolio development
- career change management

Program Management and System Support

Program management and system support consist of activities and strategies that assist in establishing, maintaining, and enhancing the program. All activities and strategies within this component provide support to the program in particular, and to the school system in general. Most often activities in this component are carried out by the guidance counsellor; however, the entire school community is involved in this component, especially system support. Suggested activities to manage and support the program include

- overseeing program implementation
- providing related professional development
- establishing relationships with community stakeholders
- establishing effective public relations and program promotion

Counsellor Time Allocation

Counsellor time allocation is critical to the successful delivery of the program components. The time allocations vary depending on program component and grade level. A suggested breakdown follows:

Elementary

Guidance Curriculum	35%–45%
Professional Services	30%–40%
Life and Career Planning	10%–25%
Program Management and System Support	10%–15%

Junior High/Middle School

Guidance Curriculum	25%–35%
Professional Services	30%–40%
Life and Career Planning	15%–25%
Program Management and System Support	10%–15%

High School

Guidance Curriculum	15%–25%
Professional Services	25%–35%
Life and Career Planning	25%–35%
Program Management and System Support	10%–15%

Program Design and Implementation

A carefully prepared plan is critical in adapting to changing needs and priorities of the school community. Developing a plan is a dynamic and ongoing process that includes and builds on any previous work. The goal is to ensure that the program is appropriate, adequate, efficient, and effective through ongoing planning, assessment, and evaluation.

Although the process outlined is cyclical, each school community must decide upon the aspects of the plan that will be the major focus for any given year. However, all the domains and components must eventually be included in a dynamic process. It is necessary to allocate time for planning and assessing. It is also important to view a comprehensive guidance and counselling program as a shared responsibility. As more stakeholders are involved in preparing the plan, there will be enhanced participation in and responsibility for implementing the program.

To be effective, the program must be carefully planned and evaluated regularly. The following steps, as indicated by the diagram below, should be followed sequentially.



Initiate the Program

Initiation of the program in a school involves meeting with the administration and staff to present the concept, design, and implementation processes and to determine and plan for any additional requirements, such as professional development. The entire school staff should be made aware of the program and should participate in the decision to pursue full implementation. Appropriate school board staff and the larger school community must also be involved in the decision to proceed with program implementation.

Prior to implementation, training for the school's guidance counsellor and at least one of the school's administrators must take place. It is expected that the Department of Education will take an active role in providing professional development opportunities for schools implementing the program.

Establish an Advisory Committee

The first step in designing and implementing the program is to establish an advisory committee. This committee consists of counsellors, educators, administrators, parents, students, and community members and should reflect the diversity of the community. The committee serves as both an idea generator and a communications link with the school community. The committee assists with the needs assessment, the design, implementation, and evaluation of the program, and the determination of new directions or modifications.

The responsibilities of the committee include

- promoting the value of the program
- conducting a needs assessment
- identifying resources
- defining priorities and expectations
- promoting awareness of the program
- defining strategies to establish and develop the program
- maintaining a continuous evaluation process

Assess Needs

The needs assessments is a major source of information for the design and direction of the program.

All data obtained from surveys must be analysed and evaluated by the program advisory committee. The priorities of students, teachers, and parents are ranked and outcomes determined by the guidance program advisory committee.

Student needs should be categorized according to specific domains (personal, social, educational, career). Some methods used to contribute to a needs assessment in a community include

- holding discussions with students, parents, and staff
- soliciting input from local groups and associations
- using surveys and questionnaires
- conducting interviews
- examining guidance program evaluations
- using focus groups
- seeking input from student councils and school advisory councils

Determine Resources

Once needs have been identified, it is necessary to determine what support services and available resources are necessary to meet these needs. Support services and available resources include

- human resources, e.g., staff, community members, agencies, volunteers
- material resources, e.g., programs, audiovisuals, literature, computer hardware and software
- financial support, e.g., budget, fund-raising, grants
- time availability, e.g., planning and evaluation, material preparation, and research
- community resources, e.g., availability and accessibility of programs and services
- school facilities, e.g., access to appropriate rooms for teaching, meeting, and counselling activities

Expected Student Outcomes

Expected student outcomes are clearly identified so that the program and its services can be described, monitored, assessed, and improved over a period of time.

The process of identifying the expected student competencies/ outcomes must promote

- increased awareness of the outcomes of different curriculum areas
- increased awareness by classroom teachers of methods to foster outcomes that are part of the guidance curriculum
- integration of guidance and counselling activities into programs for specific subject areas
- a measurable, observable demonstration that the outcomes are being achieved

Define Program Activities

Student needs are met by delivery of specific activities. The design of these activities will determine the degree to which student outcomes are achieved. Some important design questions to be answered follow:

- How does the activity address specific student needs?
- Who will receive the program (individuals, small group, large group)?
- Who is in the best position to deliver a specific activity (guidance counsellor, teacher, parent, student, other professional)?
- Does the activity have different impacts on different groups of students?
- How long will it take to deliver the activity?
- What resources are needed?
- How will the expected student outcomes be evaluated?

Implement Program Activities

Once the program activities have been defined, implementation will take place. The time frame will vary from school to school, with some activities being immediate and short term and others requiring a much longer period. This is a critical stage in the program, as it is the local needs of the school that will be most directly addressed.

Evaluate Program

The purpose of evaluation is two-fold: to determine the extent to which the outcomes have been met and to provide a vehicle for changing and revising the guidance and counselling program. Contributors to the evaluation process include students, staff, parents, guidance counsellors, and advisory committee members. The major evaluation question is: To what extent does the program appropriately, adequately, efficiently, and effectively meet the identified student's needs? In the context of this evaluation process

- **appropriateness** addresses the concerns involving the kind of activities and materials used for a particular age group
- **adequacy** addresses the concerns of the length of time a particular activity is scheduled
- **efficiency** addresses the concerns about the use of staff and counsellor time
- **effectiveness** addresses the extent to which the program is successful

Program Outcomes

The following program outcomes are based on the four student domains:

- personal
- social
- educational
- career

These outcomes provide the direction for program continuity across all grade levels.

Personal Outcomes

Students will acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to understand and appreciate themselves.

Students will be expected to

- demonstrate that they can assess their strengths, needs, values, interests, aptitudes, and accomplishments
- demonstrate use of total life experiences, activities, and interests in learning about their potential
- demonstrate that they can identify, describe, and accept their feelings about themselves and towards others
- demonstrate that they have developed skills for dealing with the physical and emotional changes that occur as they develop from childhood to adolescence to adulthood

Social Outcomes

Students will acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to relate effectively to others.

Students will be expected to

- demonstrate and apply the skills needed for effective communication
- describe the qualities they seek in their relationships with others
- recognize the diverse ways of handling emotions
- identify the different ways in which people behave in groups and evaluate the effect of these behaviours
- demonstrate an understanding of the importance of being sensitive to the feelings and needs of others in a group
- demonstrate and apply the skills needed to function productively in groups
- identify the contributions made to their community by people of different cultures, races, religious groups, abilities, ages, and lifestyles
- demonstrate respect for and the ability to interact with people of different cultures, races, religious groups, abilities, ages, and lifestyles
- understand how a community relies on the interdependence of its people

Educational Outcomes

Students will be expected to

- demonstrate knowledge of the educational options available to them at each stage of their lifelong learning
- access a wide range of educational resources planning
- understand how education relates to life and career choices
- choose educational options based on personal goals and knowledge of their strengths, interests, aptitudes, values, and accomplishments
- revise educational plans as necessary as a result of new information about themselves, the global knowledge-based economy, or changes in society
- select courses that will maximize a wide range of occupational choices

- incorporate personal work experiences, co-operative education, and volunteer work in the formulation of long-term educational plans
- demonstrate that they can successfully make the transition from one educational stage to the next
- understand the significance of motivation in successful learning
- demonstrate a knowledge of the support services resources available and how to access them
- develop and use study skills that are appropriate to their educational level
- develop and use effective time-management skills

Career Outcomes

Students will acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to develop appropriate life and career plans.

Students will be expected to

- appreciate the importance of planning for life and career development
- demonstrate an awareness of occupations in the local and global community and understand the interdependence of these occupations
- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of career-related terms such as career, occupation, job, and work in planning for the future
- demonstrate knowledge of how their experiences and decisions have already influenced their lives and will affect their lives in the future
- be aware of the influence of social and economic conditions on future choices
- identify possible future trends for life and career planning
- demonstrate effective decision-making skills in life and career planning
- utilize resources for exploring occupational alternatives
- demonstrate knowledge of themselves; their relationships with others; their skills; and their educational plans, future dreams, and predictions for the future to develop life and career plans that include short- and long-term goals
- use a student career portfolio to develop lifelong career plans
- demonstrate familiarity with the legal rights and responsibilities of employees
- demonstrate an understanding of the role of unions and other employer/employee associations
- demonstrate a knowledge of entrepreneurial characteristics

Roles of the Education Partners

In order to develop and implement the comprehensive guidance and counselling program in a school, all the stakeholders in the educational process have a role to play. The following are suggested role descriptions for the education partners when implementing the program.

Department of Education

- establishes policies, guidelines, and procedures to provide leadership and direction to school comprehensive guidance and counselling programs
- co-ordinates the planning and organization of regional activities and professional development in support of the delivery of the program
- assists in the development and acquisition of relevant resources to support the direction, delivery, and evaluation of the program
- consults with school boards and other educational partners on guidance and counselling issues

School Board

- allocates qualified guidance counsellor time in schools according to the provincially recommended student-counsellor ratio
- ensures that the program is an integral component of the curriculum at all levels
- encourages parental interest and involvement in and communication about the program in schools
- provides assistance, resources, and professional development to facilitate the successful establishment, implementation, and evaluation of the program in schools
- provides ongoing district support and monitoring of the program
- assists in the establishment or maintenance of a network of community and government agencies that directly or indirectly address the needs of students and their families
- ensures that the program addresses students' heritages, experiences, and backgrounds

School Advisory Council

- assists in communicating the aims, objectives, and outcomes of the program
 - encourages the involvement of stakeholder groups in the program in order to make shared decisions and provide solutions that benefit student learning and development
 - ensures that the outcomes identified by the needs assessment are integrated into the school improvement plan
 - seeks opportunities to acquire and provide resources needed for the program activities
 - ensures that the learning needs and career aspirations of students are addressed
-

Program Advisory Committee

- advises and assists in the implementation and delivery of the program
 - participates in needs assessment—the setting of goals and direction
 - evaluates program success in meeting stated outcomes and results
 - participates in promotion and support for the program in the school and in the community
-

School Administration

- allocates the school resources necessary to implement and operate the program
 - participates in the selection of the qualified guidance counsellor
 - assists and provides support for the program in conjunction with the school's program advisory committee
 - provides for appropriate professional development activities for school staff
 - assists in the ongoing review and evaluation of the program
-

Guidance Counsellor

- provides leadership in designing, implementing, and evaluating the program
- co-ordinates and manages the implementation of the components of the program
- provides professional counselling services
- provides professional knowledge and expertise in personal, social, educational, and career growth and development to students, parents, and school personnel

- develops partnerships and collaborative relationships with individuals and agencies in the community, including cultural organizations
 - engages in the research, professional development, education, networking, and training necessary to remain current with developments in guidance counselling and education
 - maintains current knowledge of the changing nature of Nova Scotian and Canadian society
-

School Staff

- participate in the delivery of the program through their daily interaction with students
 - teach aspects of the program related to the guidance curriculum component
 - participate as mentors and advisors to students
 - collaborate with parents, other staff, student groups, and the guidance counsellor to meet the developmental needs of all students through the program
 - suggest activities to be implemented or developed as part of the program
 - participate as members on the guidance advisory committee
 - participate in needs assessments and evaluations concerning the program
-

Parents

- participate in determining student and community needs through needs assessments
 - participate on the program advisory committee
 - participate in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the program in their school
 - assist in the promotion of the program
 - assist in acquiring resources needed to implement the program
 - encourage their children to participate in the program
-

Students

- participate in determining both student and community needs through needs assessment processes
- participate as members of the guidance advisory committee in determining the focus and direction of the program
- provide input, feedback, and suggestions for ongoing program activities or modifications
- participate in the evaluation of the program in their school

Key Program Issues

Program implementation involves many issues requiring general consideration. The following are key issues that are *program specific* and must be considered and addressed prior to full implementation.

Ratio

The recommended maximum ratio of students to guidance counsellor is 500 to 1. This applies to both elementary and secondary schools. For example, a school of 750 students would require a minimum of 1.5 guidance counsellors.

Counsellor Qualifications

In order to design and implement the program, the following guidance counsellor qualifications are required:

- has a valid Nova Scotia Teacher's Certificate
- has two years of appropriate teaching experience
- meets one of the following two conditions:
 - (i) has a masters degree in Education with a specialization in counselling, guidance, or its equivalent from a recognized college or university
 - (ii) has a graduate diploma in Education in counselling from a recognized college or university

Note: Degree, diploma or equivalency as described in (i) or (ii) must include graduate-level courses in

- individual counselling theory and techniques
- group counselling theory and techniques
- assessment or testing
- career theory and techniques
- supervised school-based practicum

Counsellor Competencies

A competent, experienced, and professional guidance counsellor has a significant role to play in the design, organization, and delivery of a Comprehensive School Guidance and Counselling Program. The guidance counsellor is a licensed teacher with graduate-level degree qualifications who assists students, parents, teachers, and school administrators by providing counselling, consulting, co-ordinating, and managing roles. To be most effective in these challenging roles, the guidance counsellor needs to be an individual who demonstrates specific skills, knowledge, and professional attitude competencies developed through the acquisition of graduate-level training and related teaching experience. These competencies are listed in Appendix A of the resource guide.

Counsellor Ethics

Ethical behaviour in guidance and counselling practice is characterized by

- respect for the dignity and integrity of persons
- responsible caring in counselling relationships
- responsibility to society

The following ethical guidelines serve as the basis for the professional conduct of qualified guidance counsellors in providing the comprehensive guidance and counselling program in Nova Scotian schools:

- A guidance counsellor must be a licensed teacher and, therefore, adhere to the Code of Ethics of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union (Appendix B).
- The additional training required to become a qualified guidance counsellor includes an additional ethical requirement. The Ethical Guidelines for Guidance Counsellors in Nova Scotia, are contained in Appendix C.
- A guidance counsellor should adhere to the principles of ethical decision making to resolve ethical dilemmas in counselling (Appendix D).

Financial Resources

Appropriate and adequate financial resources are crucial to the success of the program. A budget for the program is needed to fund guidance activities according to the identified needs.

Clerical Support

This support is required if the program is to achieve its objectives. Clerical support is cost-effective in terms of both appropriate use of human resources and achievement of program outcomes.

Electronic Communication Technology

There is a broad-based need for electronic communication resources as schools now place a greater reliance on electronic data for records transfer, information gathering, and professional development. Related areas for technology use may include

- career information
- data processing
- student assessment
- post-secondary school information
- professional development opportunities

It is expected that guidance counsellors will be familiar with the advantages, operation, and security issues associated with electronic communication.

Conclusion

The Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Program represents a conceptual shift from traditional guidance services. Its design maintains the best practices from the traditional model, while allowing adaptability so that student needs can be addressed in this rapidly changing world. The result is a broad-based, proactive approach to guidance and counselling within schools.

This program guide is intended to lay the foundation for the program. It establishes provincial parameters and provides the basis for individual schools to design their own guidance counselling program.

Appendix A
Professional Guidance Counsellor
Competencies

Professional Guidance Counsellor Competencies

A professional guidance counsellor has a significant role to play in the design and delivery of the Comprehensive School Guidance and Counselling Program. The guidance counsellor must be a licensed teacher with graduate-level training in counselling who assists students, parents, teachers, and school administrators by providing counselling, consulting, co-ordinating and program management. The guidance counsellor must demonstrate competence in the following areas: knowledge, skill, and attitude:

Knowledge

The guidance counsellor needs to know

- the Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Program
- human development theories and concepts
- learning and motivation theories and concepts
- behavioural theory and concepts
- consultation theories and techniques
- group counselling theories and techniques
- career counselling theories and techniques
- school counselling theory and techniques
- individual counselling theories and strategies
- the characteristics of students with exceptional needs
- curriculum in human development and relationships (e.g., self-esteem, conflict management, anger management)
- appropriate resources in the school and community
- the effect of societal influences on individual growth development and behaviour
- assessment processes and strategies
- ethical and legal issues related to counselling

Skills

The guidance counsellor must be able to demonstrate skills in

- implementing the Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Program
- assessing the personal, social, educational, and career needs of students
- counselling individuals and groups
 - providing personal counselling
 - providing educational counselling
 - providing career counselling
- consulting with students, parents, school staff, and agencies in the school community
- communicating with parents
- identifying and accessing resources in the school and the community

- co-ordinating school and school-community programs and services related to the Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Program
- planning and conducting staff professional development activities
- teaching self-advocacy skills such as assertiveness, social relationship, decision making, and independence as part of the program
- assisting all students in transition planning
- using information technology to facilitate program delivery to students
- mediating and negotiating
- developing student portfolios
- using appropriate crisis-intervention strategies
- making decisions that are both legal and ethical
- providing guidance curriculum instruction
- communicating expressively and receptively
- interpreting achievement, interest, aptitude, and other appropriate standardized tests
- evaluating the Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Program

Attitude Competencies

The guidance counsellor

- adheres to the code of ethics and standards as provided in the appendices
- advocates for appropriate programs and services for all students, including students with special needs
- completes a performance appraisal on a regular basis to assess strengths and areas that need further development
- maintains a personal plan for professional growth and development

Appendix B
Code of Ethics:
Nova Scotia Teachers Union

Code of Ethics: Nova Scotia Teachers Union*

I. Teacher and Pupil

- (a) The teacher regards as confidential, and does not divulge other than through professional channels, any information of a personal or domestic nature, concerning either pupils or home, obtained through the course of his/her professional duties.
- (b) The teacher should be just and impartial in all relationships with pupils.
- (c) The teacher should assume responsibility for the safety and welfare of his/her pupils, especially under conditions of emergency.
- (d) The teacher should avoid giving offence to the religious and political beliefs and moral scruples of his/her pupils and/or their parents.
- (e) The teacher should be as objective as possible in dealing with controversial matters arising out of the curriculum subjects, whether scientific or political, religious or racial.

II. Teacher and Teacher

- (a) The teacher should not make defamatory, disparaging, condescending, embarrassing, or offensive comments concerning another teacher.
- (b) The teacher shall not make derogatory remarks about the professional competence of another teacher.
- (c) The teacher shall not accept the position of another teacher who has been dismissed unjustly.
- (d) The teacher shall not accept a position arising out of the unsettled dispute between a teacher, or teachers, and local authorities.
- (e) The teacher shall not sexually harass another teacher. Sexual harassment shall mean any unsolicited and unwanted sexual comments, suggestions, or physical contact directed to a specific teacher which that teacher finds objectionable or offensive and which causes the teacher discomfort on the job. The accused teacher must be made aware of the nature of the objection prior to action being taken.

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III. Teacher and Internal Administration

- (a) The teacher should observe a reasonable and proper loyalty to internal administration of the school.
- (b) The teacher responsible for internal administration should be loyal, fair, and just to the members of the staff.
- (c) The teacher responsible for internal administration should not of his/her own initiative make any detrimental report, oral or written, on a teacher's efficiency without first discussing the matter with the teacher.

IV. Teacher and External Administration

- (a) The teacher should adhere to a contract until the contract has been terminated by mutual consent or the contract has otherwise been legally terminated. A verbal agreement is a contract.
- (b) The teacher should not accept a salary below that which he/she would receive according to the scale negotiated between the NSTU and the school board.
- (c) The teacher should not accept a salary above that which he/she would receive according to the scale negotiated between the NSTU and the school board, without notifying the local of the NSTU which is concerned.

V. Teacher and Professional Organization

- (a) The teacher should be a member of and participate in the Nova Scotia Teachers Union.
- (b) The teacher who in his/her professional capacity is a member of a committee, board, or authority dealing with matters affecting the educational program of Nova Scotia as a whole should be elected, appointed, or approved by the Nova Scotia Teachers Union.
- (c) The teacher, or group of teachers, should not take any individual action in matters which should be dealt with by his/her local or by the NSTU.
- (d) The local should not take any individual action in matters where the assistance of the NSTU has been sought or in matters requiring the authorization of the NSTU.

VI. Teacher and Profession

- (a) The teacher should maintain his/her efficiency by study, by travel, or by other means which will keep him/her abreast of the trends in education and the world in which we live.
- (b) The teacher should engage in no gainful employment, outside of his/her contract, where the employment affects adversely his/her professional status or impairs his/her standing with students, associates, and the community.

VII. Teacher and Community

(c) The teacher should not accept remuneration for tutoring his/her pupils except under unusual circumstances and with the approval of his/her supervisor or principal.

(a) The teacher should so conduct himself/herself in his/her private life that no dishonour may befall him/her or, through him/her, his/her profession.

Appendix C
Ethical Guidelines for Guidance
Counsellors in Nova Scotia

Ethical Guidelines for Guidance Counsellors in Nova Scotia*

Role of the Guidance Counsellor

- A guidance counsellor is principally concerned with the personal, social, educational, and career needs of the students, keeping in mind the best interests of the student.
- A guidance counsellor provides guidance and counselling within an educational setting. Guidance and counselling provide opportunities for students to achieve their full potential through exploring feelings, examining information, developing self-awareness and direction and skills in interpersonal relationships, and considering options for problem resolution and decision making.
- A guidance counsellor works in collaboration with school personnel, other professionals, parents, and community members.

Basic Principles

- Each person has the right to be treated with respect, dignity, and integrity.
- Each person is entitled to freedom of choice and, with that freedom, must accept responsibility for choices and decisions.
- Each person has the right to personal growth and development within the context of the personal liberties set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Primary Responsibility

A guidance counsellor's primary responsibility is to respect the integrity and promote the welfare of students.

Counselling Conditions

A guidance counsellor must inform students of the purposes, goals, and techniques of counselling, and also the specific policies under which the student may receive counselling, at or before the time when the counselling relationship is entered.

Such information includes details of confidentiality and limits to confidentiality, legal restraints on the guidance counsellor, and situations concerning consultation with other professionals. In addition, the student must be informed about mandatory reporting and the situations to which it pertains.

*Adapted with permission of the Manitoba School Counsellors Association

Confidentiality

Information received through the counselling relationship is confidential. The guidance counsellor regards such information as confidential and does not voluntarily divulge such information without the student's prior consent, taking into consideration the age, maturity, and developmental level of the student.

This statement applies equally to interview notes, tapes of interviews, test data, and any other documents used to assist in the counselling process.

Exceptions:

- (i) **Consent:** With the consent of the student, the guidance counsellor may divulge information received through the counselling relationship.
- (ii) **Potential Harm:** If behaviour of the student threatens potential harm to him/herself or another person, the guidance counsellor must take appropriate action to protect the student and/or the other person.
- (iii) **Child Protection:** A guidance counsellor, who has reason to believe that a child is or might be in need of protection, must immediately report the information to the appropriate authorities in accordance with legal obligations pursuant to child protection legislation.
- (iv) **Consultation and Collaboration:** A guidance counsellor may consult and collaborate with other professionals for purposes of more effectively helping the student. The guidance counsellor must share only such information as will serve the best interests of the student.
- (v) **Legal Requirements:** A guidance counsellor may be required to provide records in compliance with court ordered requests for information.

Stereotyping and Discrimination

Guidance counsellors must be aware of the negative impact of racial, gender, ethno-cultural, and sexual orientation stereotyping and discrimination and must at all times protect the rights and dignity of the student.

Referrals

Guidance counsellors recognize their boundaries of competence and provide only those services and use only those techniques for which they are qualified by training or experience.

Guidance counsellors must make appropriate referrals when their professional assistance either cannot adequately meet or is inappropriate to meet the student's needs.

Testing and Assessment

Whenever possible and appropriate, the guidance counsellor should make referrals with the knowledge and consent of the student. At all times, the Guidance Counsellor must act in the best interests of the student.

A guidance counsellor must explain the nature, purposes, and results of standardized tests in language that is understandable to the student. This obligation must also be observed in consulting with other professionals and parents about such test information.

A guidance counsellor must adhere to established standards regarding the selection, administration, and interpretation of standardized tests and assessment techniques.

Programs and Services

A guidance counsellor has responsibility for the process that establishes and maintains a Comprehensive Counselling and Guidance Program. This responsibility is shared through an advisory committee structure, needs assessment, program planning, and evaluation with students, parents, educators, and other professionals and community representatives.

Professional Standards

Guidance counsellors must work to attain the standards set by the Nova Scotia Department of Education and endorsed by the Nova Scotia School Counsellors Association, which is a special association of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union.

Guidance counsellors must maintain their professional competence by taking advantage of professional development opportunities in the field of guidance and counselling.

Guidance counsellors must accept only those positions for which they are professionally qualified.

Professional Relationships

Guidance counsellors must not knowingly enter or continue a counselling relationship with a student who is receiving counselling from another professional person, without consultation with that other professional, except where the best interests of the student clearly demand such an extraordinary intervention.

In their relationships with employers, colleagues, and professional organizations, guidance counsellors in the public school system must abide by the Nova Scotia Teachers Union's Code of Ethics and Department of Education's Ethical Guidelines for Guidance Counsellors.

Appendix D

Ethical Decision Making

Ethical Decision Making

Rationale

The guidance counsellor is principally concerned with the personal, social, educational, and career needs of students, keeping in mind the best interest of the students. Many ethical situations facing guidance counsellors are complex and require professional judgment. These guidelines are provided to Nova Scotia's guidance counsellors primarily for support and clarity as they respond to the increasing ethical dilemmas challenging them. The guidance counsellor must respect students' rights, dignity, and privacy. At the same time the rights of parents and concerns of staff must be considered. The guidelines are also intended to assist boards and associations in developing policy and protocols founded on professional counsellor ethics.

Ethical decision making requires that guidance counsellors stay abreast of legal and ethical issues related to their practices. *These guidelines are designed to provide principles and suggestions to help understand, prevent, and respond to ethical dilemmas.*

Principles

1. Students have the right to access the services of the guidance and counselling program in schools offering it.
2. Counselling services are most effective when students voluntarily seek them.
3. Disclosure of confidential information regarding a student should be done with the student's knowledge.
4. Co-operation with parents is desirable and preferable, therefore, the guidance counsellor should consider informing the parents of the provided counselling service in the event that there is
 - significant interference to other aspects of the student's program
 - group counselling
 - a student who is personally or academically at risk
 - an immediate opportunity for the parent to be a part of the solution
5. When, in the counsellor's professional opinion, a staff member's understanding and support may be helpful, he/she needs to be informed with expressed confidentiality and preferably with the consent of the student.

6. The principal should be informed and consulted when parent(s) object to counselling service for the student. The resolution of this ethical dilemma should take into consideration

- the wishes and needs of the student
- the professional judgment of the guidance counsellor
- concerns of parents and others

Key Terms

Client—any student who has a counselling relationship with the guidance counsellor; any student who accesses other professional services of a guidance counsellor; or a staff member or parent/guardian when related to the well-being of students.

Confidentiality—an ethical term denoting a counselling practice with individuals or groups relevant to privacy, not secrecy; implies that the client can trust the guidance counsellor, having confidence that the guidance counsellor will share information only when it is deemed to be in the best interest of the client.

Counselling Relationship—when a client engages a guidance counsellor in a formal, professional process with a common understanding of confidentiality, purposes, goals, roles, responsibilities, and limitations.

Dilemma—a tension between two or more possible courses of action.

Informed Consent—the client agrees to allow the guidance counsellor to divulge relevant information to others with the understanding of the purpose and potential implications of this disclosure.

Professional Consultation—a discussion with expressed confidentiality between professionals, informed consent is preferred.

Professional Guidance Counsellor—a licensed teacher with graduate-level counselling credentials that allow them to be certified as full members of the appropriate provincial and/or national counsellors associations.

Resolving Ethical Dilemmas

Record—official or unofficial documentation, as per school board policy, regarding students, including

- **Cumulative Record**—an official school record of an individual student's progress through school
- **Confidential File**—an individual student file that contains unofficial and official documentation including confidential case conference summaries and reports of a sensitive nature from schools and/or other agencies. These files have limited access and may not be permanent
- **Counselling Case Notes**—confidential documentation regarding the counselling relationship, regardless of format or storage location, for guidance counsellor use only.

Referral—the process of obtaining counselling services with the guidance counsellor or an outside agency.

Before an ethical dilemma occurs, the guidance counsellor, whose role includes being an advocate for students, should

1. attempt to meet the guidance and counselling needs of all students in the school (along with any other guidance counsellors on staff)
2. become knowledgeable and keep abreast of current information, practices, laws, policies, and standards regarding counselling strategies and relationships, especially,
 - ethical decision-making models
 - the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
 - Education Act
 - regulations under the Education Act
 - codes of ethics of related professional associations
 - school board policies
3. be cognizant of professional responsibility to use the above knowledge in making professional judgments
4. maintain positive public relations for the program by enhancing awareness of the guidance and counselling program and related services available and the manner in which they are provided
5. make students aware of the limits of confidentiality in entering the counselling relationship
6. keep case notes

7. continue professional development, particularly regular professional dialogue about ethical matters
8. participate in the following related associations:
 - Nova Scotia School Counsellors Association (NSSCA)
 - Nova Scotia Association of Professional Counsellors (NSAPC)
 - Canadian Counselling Association (CCA)

When an ethical dilemma occurs, the guidance counsellor should take the time required to

1. identify and articulate the conflicting principles creating the ethical dilemma
2. assess whether additional information is required and available
3. establish a time line for decision making
4. acknowledge his/her own emotional response(s)
5. list positive and negative consequences of each course of action for all concerned individuals
6. consider possible legalities surrounding the issue
7. identify boundaries of professional competence
8. consult with a peer, other related professional, or appropriate authority
9. rationalize his/her own decision and take action

After an ethical dilemma has been resolved, the guidance counsellor should

1. document his/her professional decision
2. consider informing the principal and/or other appropriate authorities
3. reflect on the decision's impact on the student, counsellor, and others (e.g., staff, parents) and on future decision making

Related Issues

Records

Cumulative Record—Guidance counsellors must be aware that nothing can be removed from this file except as regulated by the Education Act and outlined by board policy and procedure. Guidance Counsellors must exercise professional judgment in entering information into this permanent file.

Counselling Case Notes—Counselling notes, a professional responsibility of guidance counsellors, aid the counselling process by keeping track of the issues and the progress made in the counselling relationship. Be mindful of the student's dignity at all times because notes are not always considered to be privileged communication. These notes can be subpoenaed, or they may be accessed by designated personnel in appropriate circumstances. It is recommended that notes be kept in a secure location and the contents confined to the specifics of the issue(s) being explored by the guidance counsellor and student. Case notes and/or summaries should be kept as long as they are appropriate and relevant to the best interest of the student. Guidance counsellors must be aware of related board policy.

Disclosure

Any disclosures should be made respecting confidentiality and its limitations. The maturity and developmental level of the student must be taken into consideration in determining their understanding of the purpose and potential implications of the disclosure.

It is understood that the nature of certain concerns warrants discussion with the client regarding the value of informing their parents. The guidance counsellor's primary ethical concern is the well-being of the student. While informed consent is ideal, there may be times when the guidance counsellor deems it necessary to consult with parents or others without the student's consent.

Referral and Communication

The guidance counsellor has a responsibility to consider the client's privacy in the use of any forms of communication or referral. It is considered necessary for guidance counsellors to have access to communication equipment (fax machines, telephones, computers, etc.) that can be used privately and to have private facilities in which to meet with students. While word-of-mouth can be a private form of referral, it is not considered to be reliable, therefore, a process of written referral is recommended.

Such forms make the referral process more efficient overall and generally provide better information because more thought is required for their completion.

Guidance counsellors are encouraged to use the referral form that best facilitates the process, being private, user-friendly, and expedient. There may be different types of forms for staff, parents, and student self-referral.

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